



King County

VETERANS AND HUMAN SERVICES LEVY 2008 STRATEGY AREA ANNUAL REPORTS

Strategy 4.3

Fund early childhood intervention and prevention services

OBJECTIVE

The Levy's fourth strategy helps families at risk with a set of programs designed to strengthen the bonds between parents and children and to help parents become self-sufficient. Many families have a difficult time getting off to the right start: teen parents, immigrants, and parents who have been homeless or incarcerated or have experienced domestic violence often need help learning to care for their children and build a stable life. This kind of help – in the early months and years after a child is born – can prevent child abuse and neglect, while giving children and their families a healthy start on life.

The goal of Strategy 4.3 is to support at-risk families with children under age five, through home visits to strengthen the healthy interactions between parents and their children, training for caregivers and staff who work with high-risk children, and improved access to culturally competent services for immigrants and refugees.

POPULATION FOCUS

This strategy focuses on families with young children—primarily under the age of five—who live in environments where stressors are particularly high. Examples include families who are living in poverty, families of active duty Guard and Reservists, families in which one or both parents are unemployed or underemployed, families with domestic violence involvement, families experiencing homelessness, and families struggling with substance abuse or mental health problems. In addition, for some families, limited English proficiency or immigrant/refugee status can lead to stresses that interfere with healthy child development.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Strengthening Families promotes an integrative approach that fosters the protective factors related to strong families while reducing family risks and deficits. Evidence-based models built on promoting parents' strengths have been proven to be more effective in engaging high risk families. The prevention framework for Strengthening Families includes three investment areas:

- **Home Visiting** programs to support the healthy interactions between parent and child in the early months and years of life. Research has shown the link between these programs and the prevention of child abuse and neglect and later prevention of a child's involvement in the criminal justice system.
- **Training** for caregivers and staff who work with high-risk children under the age of five and their families. Training in evidence-based curricula has been shown to improve staff skills and help create high-quality environments in which children and families learn and grow.
- **Improved Access** to services for immigrants and refugees new to this county who are isolated due to language and culture.

This framework includes a variety of theoretical, evidence-based or promising approaches for supporting parents and caregivers. Although each program may utilize unique strategies, the final result is expected to advance the common goal of strengthening families to promote the healthy development of young children. This achieved, more children will be ready to start school, there will be a reduction in child abuse and neglect, and ultimately a reduction of involvement in the criminal justice system and a reduction of the risk of homelessness.

PROGRESS DURING 2008

The team conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for each Strengthening Families investment area (home visiting, training, improved access) during summer 2007. A total of \$521,593 in program funding was identified in the Strengthening Families procurement plan to be allocated within the three investment areas for 2008.

In the fall of 2007, funds were awarded to four community-based agencies to provide programs within the three Strengthening Families investment areas. Contracts were negotiated in the fall of 2007 and began January 1, 2008.

Agency	Program Name	Investment Area	Veterans Funds Awarded	Human Services Funds	Total Levy Funds Awarded
Friends of Youth	Healthy Start	Home Visiting	0	270,000	270,000
Child Care Resources	Family Friends and Neighbors & Play and Learn Networks	Training	0	53,000	53,000
University of Washington (UW)	Promoting First Relationships (PFR) Train the Trainer Program	Training	0	60,000	60,000
Chinese Information and Service Center	Cultural Navigator Program	Access	0	75,000	75,000
		Total	0	\$458,000	\$458,000

In addition to these three areas, the University of Washington's Promoting First Relationships Train the Trainer Program selected three community agencies to receive intensive training. An RFP process was used during spring 2008 to select the three agencies to be trained.

Agency	Veterans Funds Awarded	Human Services Funds	Total Levy Funds Awarded
Family Services of King County	0	15,467	15,467
Navos	0	12,703	12,703
Odessa Brown Children's Clinic	0	20,361	20,361
Total	0	\$48,531	\$48,531

Agencies not selected for the intensive UW PFR Train the Trainer Program were offered the opportunity to learn more about PFR by sending a staff member to attend a three-day PFR training in May 2008. Two agencies attended this training.

After these processes, \$13,882 in unspent 2008 funds was carried forward to 2009 to support the three community agencies in training additional agency staff.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Services provided through this activity were organized into three investment areas.

Investment Area 1: Home Visiting. A total of \$270,000 was awarded to expand and enhance the Healthy Start program. Healthy Start is a community collaboration of five local human service providers. The program has been providing home visiting services throughout King County for 15 years, targeting young, at-risk, first time mothers and their infants. The majority of participants are very low income.

Levy funds were used to add 3.8 Healthy Start employees in direct service and program support roles, lower home visiting caseloads, and implement a new data management system. In addition, the program was expanded with the addition of a new Healthy Start partner, Renton Area Youth Services to serve South King County families.

Healthy Start provides two delivery models for intensive home visiting:

- Visits conducted by professional Family Support Specialists for high-risk families (90% of families)
- Visits by volunteer Parent Mentors who are paired with a family that has no more than one risk factor (10% of families).

In 2008, 15 Family Support Specialists and 33 trained volunteer Parent Mentors conducted home visits. Thanks to increases in staffing funded by the Levy, Family Support Specialists were able maintain caseloads close to the optimum recommended (25 families). However, there is currently a waiting list for families to participate in Healthy Start in South King County.

Another significant program improvement made possible with Levy funds was the implementation of a computer database system called Efforts to Outcomes for use by Family Support Specialists and administrators. This database allows easy tracking of participant outcomes and does away with labor-intensive handwritten case notes and cumbersome data collection systems.

Investment Area 2: Training. In 2008, Levy funds were used to help two organizations, Child Care Resources and the University of Washington provide training programs.

- **Child Care Resources.** Child Care Resources was contracted to expand the Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Network and the FFN Play and Learn Project. The FFN Network is a community-based coalition of resources for family, friends, and neighbors caregivers and the children in their care. Family, friends, and neighbors provide care for an estimated 60,000 children in King County. For 28,000 of those children, they are the primary source of care when parents are working or attending school. The FFN Play and Learn groups teach caregivers and parents about early childhood development and education. Groups are structured to allow both parent/caregiver and child to learn through play.

Levy funding supported development of the Play and Learn curriculum for play groups, the development of a Play and Learn tool kit, and additional training for Play and Learn

group facilitators. Levy funding also helped FFN expanded the number of Play and Learn groups from 55 to over 60.

- **UW Promoting First Relationships Train the Trainer Project.** The UW was awarded \$60,000 in Levy funding to provide the Promoting First Relationship (PFR) Train the Trainer Project, a curriculum for service providers to help parents and other caregivers meet young children's social and emotional needs. It is researched-based and considered a promising practice. The PFR curriculum covers issues critical to supporting and guiding caregivers in building nurturing and responsive relationships with children. Three community-based agencies were selected through an RFP process to participate in the 300 hours of training provided by PFR.

Investment Area 3: Improving Access. The Chinese Information and Service Center received Levy funds to expand and enhance the Cultural Navigator Program. Cultural Navigator helps limited and non-English speaking individuals and families to access appropriate services and navigate through service systems. Cultural Navigator operates in four locations in South and East King County. Services are provided by bilingual/ bicultural staff in Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian and Punjabi. Many of those who use Cultural Navigator are grandparents who live in families where both parents work and need information and resources for both their children and grandchildren.

Levy funding was used to help Cultural Navigator add a fourth location in South King County and increase hours at the three original East King County locations. Thanks to Levy funding, during 2008 the number of individuals served on a monthly basis nearly doubled. Levy funding also helped Cultural Navigator to function as a resource for community-based providers that serve immigrants and refugees.

Number Served. Tallying the total number of people served for this sub-strategy is difficult, because many of the Levy-funded activities focused on training providers rather than on serving clients directly. It is clear, however, that more than 2,000 families were served during 2008.

- **Investment Area 1: Home Visiting (Healthy Start).** In 2008, Healthy Start served 348 families in North, East and South King County.

Total Served	East	North	Seattle	South	Unknown
348	259	54	5	27	3

- **Investment Area 2: Training (Play and Learn).** Friends, Family & Neighbor Network Play and Learn groups served 1,919 unduplicated families (consisting of at least one parent/caregiver and child) during 2008. This is a substantial increase over numbers served in 2007. Groups are located in Seattle, North, East and South King County. Many groups are bilingual and bicultural. Data on exact numbers served in each region of the county is not available.
- **Investment Area 3: Improving Access (Cultural Navigator).** In 2008, Cultural Navigator served 633 unduplicated individuals, primarily from East and South King County. On average, participants accessed Cultural Navigator services three times during 2008. During the last six months of 2008, Cultural Navigator served 316 people.

Total Served (second half 2008)	East	North	Seattle	South	Unknown
316	157	4	16	83	56

Living Situation. Most served by Healthy Start or Cultural Navigator over the course of 2008 had homes; only five people registered as homeless.

Living Situation		
Homeless	5	0.5%
Not Homeless	858	87.5%
Unknown	118	12.0%

Age Group. Participants in these two programs were generally parents, grandparents, or caregivers, ranging in age from 14 to over 85.

Age Group		
0 to 5		
6 to 10		
11 to 13		
14 to 17	113	11.5%
18 to 34	324	33.0%
35 to 59	180	18.3%
60 to 74	185	18.9%
75 to 84	101	10.3%
85 and over	11	1.1%
Unknown	67	6.8%

Gender. Those served by the two programs were primarily female.

Gender		
Male	217	22.1%
Female	729	74.3%
Unknown	35	3.6%

Outcomes. Each of the projects funded in this area tracked outcomes separately.

Investment Area 1: Home Visiting (Healthy Start)

- 95 percent of the families participating in the project were not involved in reported incidences of domestic violence or child abuse and neglect in the home.
- 100 percent of the parents participating in the projects who are identified with parental stress are offered interventions.
- 89 percent of parents participating in the project had delayed their second pregnancy for a minimum of two years after the first pregnancy.
- 100 percent of children and pregnant women had access to health care and were linked with a medical provider.
- 91 percent of the parents participating in the program reported decreased parental stress.
- 95 percent of parents participating in the program reported feeling more confident in their parenting skills.

Investment Area 2: Training (Play and Learn)

- 81 percent of parents/caregivers indicated they had changed a behavior, such as reading with, talking to, and doing activities that lead to increased school readiness in their children.
- 56 percent of parents/caregivers indicated they were better equipped to increase their child's healthy social-emotional development by attending Play and Learn Groups.
- 72 percent of parents/caregivers increased their knowledge of caregiver roles and child behavior that promotes healthy and nurturing caregiver-child relationships.

Investment Area 2: Training (UW Train the Trainer) Data is not yet available on these outcomes. Outcomes that will be measured include:

- Increased school readiness
- Increased children's healthy social-emotional development
- Increased responsive, nurturing caregiver relationships.

Investment Area 3: Improving Access (Cultural Navigator)

- 93 percent of the Cultural Navigator project expanded operations in 2008 by providing a new service participants indicated the Cultural Navigator project increased their access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services and resources in the community.
- Cultural Navigator project staff was in contact with a total of 269 individuals from community agencies for consultation, collaboration, and the sharing of resources. This included members of non-profits groups and agencies, government, schools, the medical field, and others.

SUCCESS STORIES

Maria and Jose, a couple in their early 20s, had moved to Renton in 2007 hoping for a bright future. But things had not gone well. Jose was unemployed, Maria was pregnant, and they were living in an unfurnished apartment where they slept on the floor and didn't even have electricity. Neither of them spoke English, and they were isolated, and so worried about their prospects that Maria was having trouble eating and sleeping. Maria had found a part-time job in a laundry, but it didn't pay well and she couldn't communicate with her boss. Maria and Jose had little money for rent or food and hadn't been able to afford medical care for Maria. They didn't know what they would do when the baby was born.

A case manager at the Renton Area Youth Services' Healthy Start Program was able to help. She first intervened with Maria's boss, to help clarify the terms of Maria's employment. She arranged for beds, food, clothes, utilities, bus tickets, and baby supplies, and then helped Maria find medical care. Next, she helped Jose enroll in a job training program.

By the time their baby was born, Jose had a job. Maria is home caring for the baby, but hopes to return to work soon. They have furniture and enough food to eat, and know they have support throughout the community. Best of all, their Healthy Start case manager will be able to help them for three years.

"I don't even want to think what would happen with my family if we wouldn't received the enormous support that the Healthy Start provided to us," Maria said recently. "My family and I will always be grateful."

Excerpt from an open letter from 36 members of the Russian community in Bellevue to Cultural Navigator Program leaders

We are writing this letter from the Russian community who live in the Crossroads neighborhood and are from the former Soviet Union to express our sincere appreciation of "M" who works at the Cultural Navigator program at Mini City Hall. Her help makes it possible for us to get the help we need. We wanted to let you know how much we appreciate this.

She gives special attention to each person and she knows the process to help us with our issues. She gives good help and advice with our many problems. She knows all the information and if she does not know she will find out. When we are worried or scared we come to her and she helps us decide what to do next.

We respect her kindness and her extensive knowledge. She stands for humanity and gives so much without expectation of recognition. We don't know what we would do without her help and without this program at Mini City Hall.

We feel a part of the community because the city and this wonderful Cultural Navigator Program provides someone who speaks our language to help us. We thank you for this and we hope to have a person who speaks Russian and knows our culture to continue to be there to help us.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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